



**For Immediate Release:**

March 18, 2011

## **HEALTH ADVISORY: UPDATE #2**

**Public Health, Emergency Management Officials Reiterate: There is NO increased risk of radiation exposure from nuclear power complex situation in Japan**

LOS ANGELES – The Los Angeles County Health Officer, Dr. Jonathan E. Fielding, reiterated to all residents that **there is no increased risk of harmful levels of radiation exposure in the United States based on the situation to date at the nuclear power complex in Japan.** Dr. Fielding participated in a joint agency conference call to discuss this topic yesterday, March 17, 2011, with Dr. Howard Backer, Interim Director of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), and Mike Dayton, Acting Secretary for the California Emergency Management Agency (Cal-EMA).

“We understand there is concern over the nuclear power complex situation in Japan, and we want to reassure everyone that multiple agencies at the local, state and federal levels are working together to monitor this situation out of an abundance of caution,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. “Our position has not changed: we still do not expect to see an increase in harmful levels of radiation in California. We will continue to provide you with the latest, most accurate information possible.”

Recently, news reports have discussed plume models that forecast the path of radiation released in Japan. These models do not track actual radiation levels, but instead make a prediction of where radiation may be carried based on weather patterns at that particular moment. Given that more than 5,000 miles separate Southern California from Japan, any radiation from Japan is expected to disburse well before reaching the West Coast. The public should be reassured that LA County is equipped with highly sensitive, redundant monitoring systems capable of detecting any significant elevation in radiation levels.

The public is encouraged to check reliable sources for up-to-date information on this issue. **CDPH has set up a hotline with information available in English and Spanish at (916) 341-3947. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also has a hotline with information available 24/7 at (800) CDC-INFO (800-232-4636).**

“We also want to deter people from ingesting potassium iodide (KI) out of concern of possible exposure. Taking KI is not only ineffective, but could also cause side effects,” said Dr. Fielding. “If a need should arise for residents to start taking potassium iodide to guard against effects of radiation exposure, the Los Angeles County Public Health Department – along with other local, state and federal agencies – will inform the public. **We do not anticipate this need.**”

Potassium iodide, or KI, is a stable form of iodine. During a nuclear emergency, persons may be exposed to a radioactive form of iodine, which can be harmful to the thyroid gland. In such an



event, public health officials may recommend use of KI to offer some protection. KI is not recommended for use as a precautionary medication, unless there is a specific emergency that warrants use as recommended by public health officials.

Although usually benign, it can be harmful to people with allergies to iodine or shellfish, those with certain skin disorders, or those with thyroid problems. Observed but infrequent side effects of ingesting potassium iodide include nausea, intestinal upset, rashes, inflammation of the salivary glands, and possibly severe allergic reactions. KI cannot protect the body from radioactive elements other than radioactive iodine—if radioactive iodine is not present, taking KI is not protective.

All residents are reminded to prepare a basic, emergency kit to prepare for any kind of disaster. While potassium iodide is not a recommended component of such a kit, there are at least 10 Essential Items, as recommended by the Emergency Survival Program in LA County's Office of Emergency Management, which should be included:

- |                                 |                  |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Water                        | 2. Food          |
| 3. Cash and Important Documents | 4. Clothes       |
| 5. Flashlight                   | 6. First Aid Kit |
| 7. Prescription Medication      | 8. Radio         |
| 9. Toiletries                   | 10. Tools        |

These essential items will help ensure that people have access to basic essentials when other resources may not be available during an emergency. It is also vital that families put together a Communications Plan, such as a pre-planned place to meet and a designated out-of-state contact, in case family members are separated or at work or school when a disaster strikes.

For more general information on earthquake and disaster readiness, visit the Public Health website at <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>.

A replay of the joint agency conference call held with Public Health, CDPH and Cal-EMA is available at <http://cdph.ca.gov/Pages/DEFAULT.aspx>.

For more information on potassium iodide (KI), visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website at <http://emergency.cdc.gov/radiation/ki.asp>.

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises more than 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$750 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do, please visit <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>, visit our YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/lapublichealth>, or follow us on Twitter: LAPublicHealth.

###